May 20, 1977

Dear Councilmember:

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of you who responded to my questionnaire. Many of you expressed an interest in receiving the results, and I can think of no better way to show my appreciation than to mail you the summaries. Since I don't know which of you responded, I am sending this letter to everyone who originally received the questionnaire (120). Many of you indicated that the results of the survey would be valuable for the many speeches and presentations you are called upon to make at schools, service clubs, women's groups, etc. Also, some excellent ideas were generated in your open-ended responses, and I believe you can benefit from the comments and suggestions made by other Councilwomen (sorry to have to use that word which offends some of you, but for purposes of my report, I needed to make a differentiation between male and female Councilmembers).

I feel that I know so much about you, that I will tell you a little about myself. I am 42, and started college when my children went away to college. I will graduate this fall with a B.A. from Univ. of San Francisco. For the last 9 years, I have worked for the City of Martinez as Deputy City Clerk, attending all council meetings. During hot and hostile hearings I have looked up at the Council from my comfortable Clerk seat and wondered, "Good Lord, why do they do it?" I also wondered "where are the women?", and so I deliberately chose the subject "Women Serving on California City Councils" for my Community Involvement Project, so that I could satisfy my 9-year curiosity. I now have answers to both these questions.

During my preliminary readings on women in government (mostly in state and national - very little is written about women in local govt.), I came across several quotations of a sexist nature which have been made publicly by some famous male politicians. This made me wonder if there is much sexism being perceived on the local level, and I designed some of my questions to seek this information. You have answered my questions to my satisfaction, and the results are graphed.

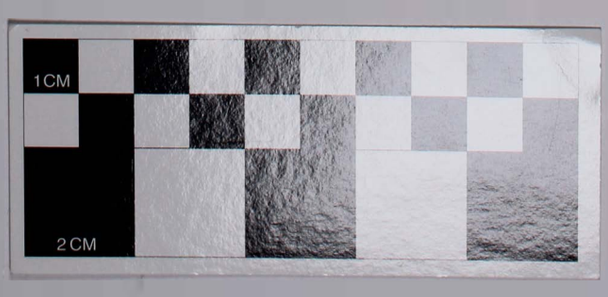
It is a shame that the print on the subsequent pages is so small. This was necessary to get all the pertinent data onto 4 pages (for 13¢ postage - all students are poor, even 42 year old ones). My full report is some 125 pages long, but if you have any questions about the remainder of the report, I will try to send you whatever you ask for.

Thank you again, and I hope I will be able to meet some of you at the upcoming League of California Cities conference in San Francisco.

Sincerely,

Ruth A. Steiner

Ruth A. Steiner
3730 Parkmall Ct.
Concord, California 94519



SOME GENERAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION FROM REPORT

Women constitute 52% of population and 53% of voting population.

From files at League of California Cities, Berkeley, I would identify 281 Councilwomen in January, 1977, as compared to 194 in 1974.

There appears to be no relation between the size of the city and the number of women on their councils, i.e., Oakland has 0, Los Angeles has 1, Fresno has 1. Bakersfield has 0, San Jose has 2.

The cities of Berkeley, Claremont, Sausalito, Victorville, and Woodside have a majority of female Councilmembers.

Occupations of Councilwomen (other than Council)
28 gave no occupation
109 of the remaining 253 listed "housewife" or "homemaker". (43.1%)
25 " " " " " "teacher" or "educator". (9.9%)
12 " " " " " "Sales or Business Woman" (4.7%)
9 " " " " " "real estate" or "realtor" (3.6%)
Remaining 98 gave wide variety such as trucker, physician-surgeon, Planning Commissioner, secretary, law student, nurse, stockbroker, architect, business owner, etc.

There were 33 female Mayors in January of 1977.

Out of 120 mailed, I received 87 (72.5%) responses to my questionnaire. (50% response to any questionnaire is very good.) Not all Councilwomen chose to answer all questions. Some questions did not apply to them.

Education - 70 Responses

High School	1 - 2 Yrs. College	2 - 4 Yrs. College	Post-Grad School
25	16	12	17
(35.7%)	(22.9%)	(17.1%)	(24.3%)

Age - 83 Responses

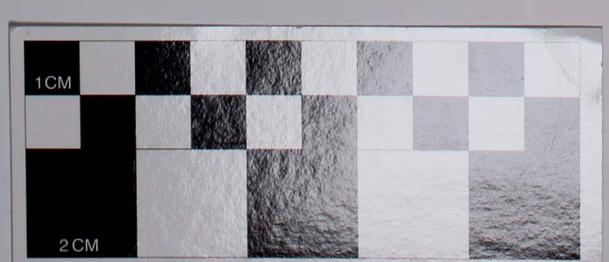
25-35 Yrs.	35-45 Yrs.	45-55 Yrs.	55-65 Yrs.	Over 65 Yrs.
10	24	34	12	3
(12.0%)	(28.9%)	(41.0%)	(14.5%)	(3.6%)

Elected or Appointed - 78 Responses

66 Elected (84.6%) 12 originally appointed (15.4%) Some of those who were appointed to Council subsequently ran and won.

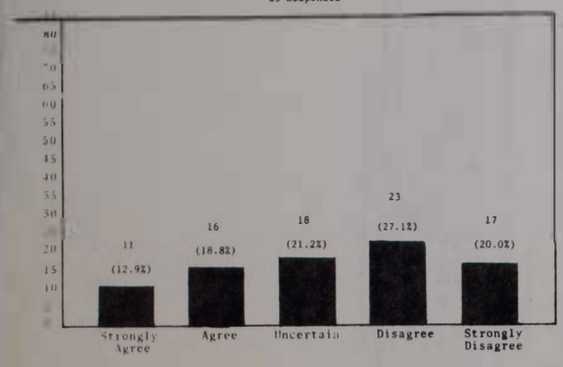
No. Yrs. on Council - 50 Responses (Can't explain low response)

1 - 2 Yrs.	3 - 4 Yrs.	5 - 6 Yrs.	7 - 8 Yrs.	Over 8 Yrs.
20	21	2	4	3
(40.0%)	(42.0%)	(4.0%)	(8.0%)	(6.0%)



QUESTION #9 "I feel that the women in my constituency are less reluctant to contact /approach me than they would a male Councilmember."

85 Responses



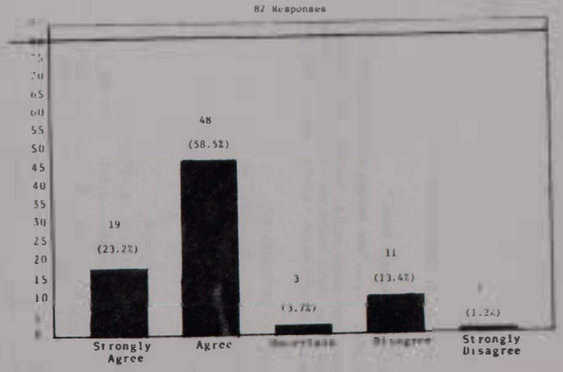
SUMMARY: While there is somewhat of an even spread of responses, the answer to this question appears to be "no". I cannot discern any reason for this, one way or the other.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Both men and women appear to approach me with less reluctance than they have with some male Councilmembers."

QUESTION #10 "I find that acquaintances like to discuss local issues when I am in a social setting."

82 Responses



SUMMARY: From the answers, it is pretty clear that acquaintances like to engage the Councilwomen in issue discussion while in social gatherings. No response indicated that it a problem.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

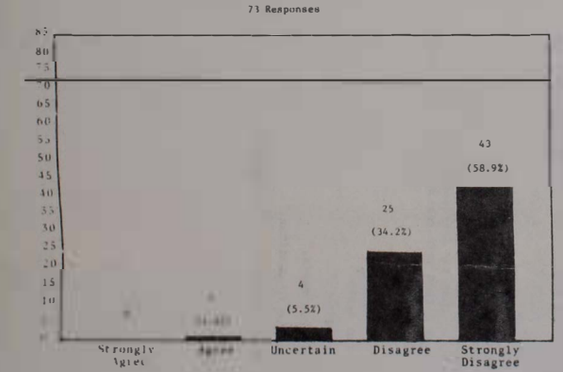
"Yes, but not all the time."

"Sometimes."

"Everywhere."

QUESTION #11 "People often assume that my husband is really making the decisions for the City, and I am merely 'fronting' for him."

71 Responses



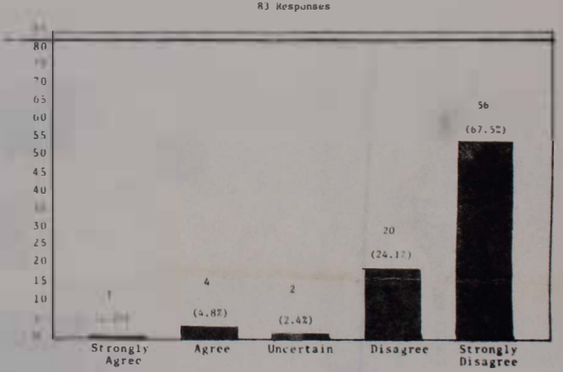
SUMMARY: It seems clear from the responses that no one feels that they are being viewed as fronting for their husband. This question did not apply to some, as there are several who indicated that they are widows, divorcees, or unmarried. While it does not directly relate to the question, two Councilwomen noted that they are constantly identified in the local newspapers and in introductions as "Mrs. ....., wife of ....."

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Are you kidding"?

QUESTION #12 "Sometimes I feel that the men on the Council are more intelligent or mentally equipped for this job than I am."

83 Responses



SUMMARY: The Councilwomen responding appear to be very confident of their abilities, and are holding their own ground. Several did, however, recognize that their lack of business background needed extra effort to overcome.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

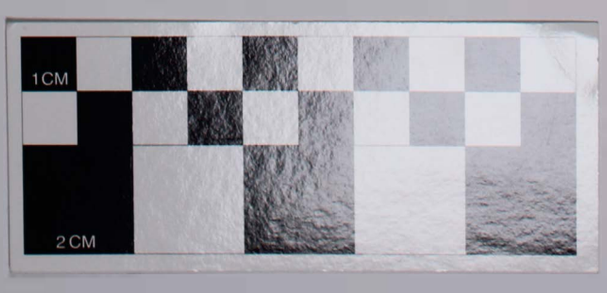
"Only in certain cases do I agree."

"Sometimes."

"Strongly disagree, but I do not have as varied a background, which is limiting."

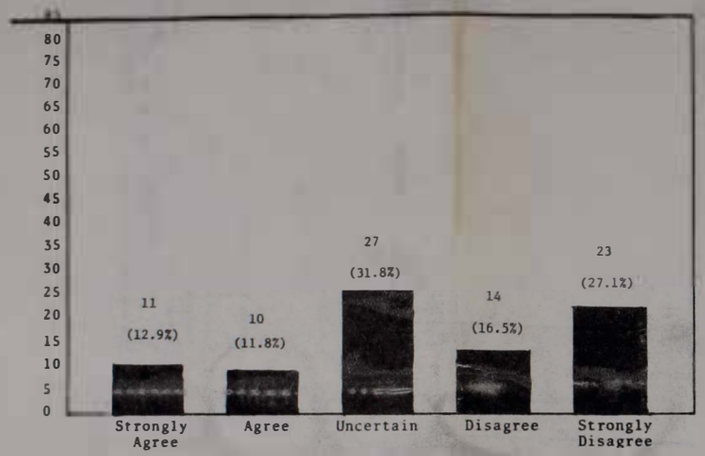
"Let's face it - it depends on what we are doing. Naturally in some areas, they are more qualified - I'm not an Engineer, one is!"

"Too many women feel that men can still do things better than women (a dumb conclusion)."



QUESTION #13 "At the end of my present term, I will not consider running again."

85 Responses



SUMMARY: The majority indicated that they are uncertain, and their decision will depend on a number of factors. Many stated that the reading, writing, speaking, site visiting, etc. are tremendously time-consuming. Several Councilwomen indicated that their job is not yet done, and will stay on until satisfied. It should be noted that the sub-question was "why not". It would have been interesting to have gotten more reasons about "why" they will run again.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"I enjoy the Council and most certainly will run again."

"I like the office, and I'm sure I'm doing a good job."

"Moving from city, otherwise I definitely would run again."

"I am enjoying being on the Council and would like to continue."

"I feel I have a contribution to make, and am encouraged by my performance, and by my constituent's approval."

"I enjoy my work."

QUESTION #13a "I will not run for Council again because ....."

"If I can find a good candidate, I will support them."

"Two terms" "12 years" "8 years" etc. ....."are enough time to give to City."

"Most City jobs are male-oriented - City water works, sewers, road repairs, etc. Women as a rule know very little about these subjects. Even if they learn rapidly, they don't have an experience with which to help the men make wise judgments."

"Personal interests, possibly conflict of interest."

"Ready to move on to other things - County - Regional, etc."

"Poor health."

"Husband may retire, if so, may not want to continue."

"Other career goals."

"Lots of qualified people and City needs new input."

"Am now working full-time and have not the time to be effective."

"I plan to run for higher office" (Several indicated this as reason)

"I have accomplished those goals I set after, and wish to do other things, but will continue to be involved; however, cannot commit another 4 years."

"I feel I don't speak up enough."

"Too political, too much negativism - many obstructionists. By end of term I will have had ample time to express my views and introduce my proposals."

"Elected officials become too conscious during last 1-1/2 - 2 years of their terms about re-election to stand by their convictions and decisions, thereby losing their effectiveness."

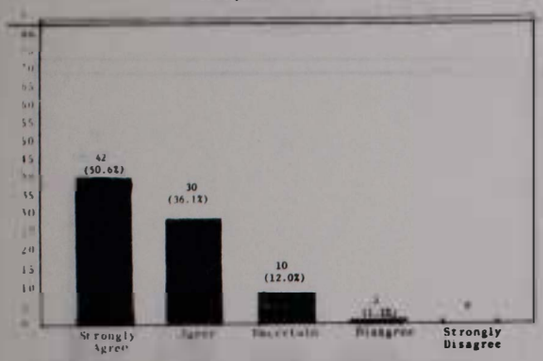
"Husband retiring - moving from community."

"Husband retiring, and I don't want to be tied down." (Several indicated this as reason.

SUMMARY: Of those who indicated they will not run again, almost none gave purely political reasons. Most indicated that they have served several years and feel it is enough. My impression is that the job is so draining that the energy level eventually drops. Several indicated that they wanted to run for higher office. Many who do not plan to run again indicated that either they or their husband (or both) plan to retire and they do not want to be tied down. Several expressed that they feel they have accomplished what they went onto Council for.

QUESTION #1 "I feel there should be more women serving on City Councils."

83 Responses



SUMMARY: It is clear that most of those responding would like to see more women serving on Councils; however, many respondants wanted it clear that they only want to see women who are dedicated, sincere, intelligent, and willing to put in the necessary time.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Only if they are sincere."

" I would like to see dedicated people, male or female."

"Don't Care."

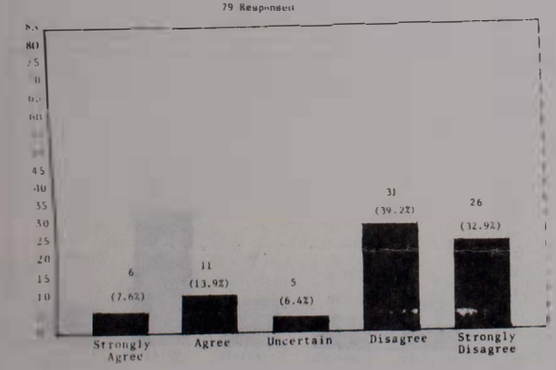
"Competency not dependent on sex, either male or female. Good councilmembers needed."

"Sex not important, ability counts."

"I believe women should be aware that an elected position is a challenge which a woman can meet just as well as a man."

QUESTION #3 "Being a woman on the Council, I feel my input is often ignored or poo-pooed by the male members of the group."

79 Responses



SUMMARY:

The majority of councilwomen disagreed with this statement. Several did state, however, that it took time before they were fully accepted by the male councilmembers - usually about a year.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Expected sexist problems, but encountered none."

"Good working relations with other members - 5 councilmembers-not 4 men, 1 woman.

"I never knew what the term 'Chauvinist pig' meant before serving on council. Now I do."

"Women who exude intelligence & confidence are accepted by male counterparts."

"I have experienced some chauvinism."

"I wasn't taken seriously for about a year, but proved myself in time."

"These questions are unfair and assume men see women as incompetent."

"I'm in my 3rd term, and male members won't 'let' me be mayor."

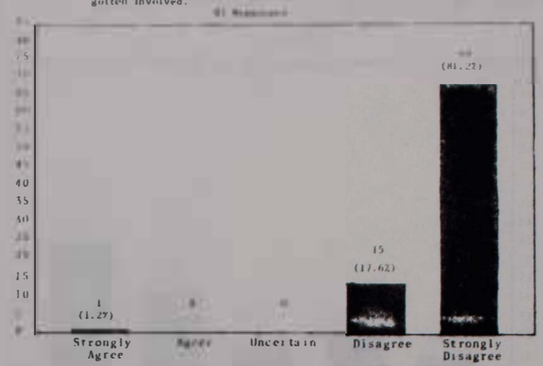
"This is a male-oriented group - it took time before I was accepted."

"I have not encountered any discrimination."

"One male member in group will not accept me."

"I am uncomfortable as a woman on the Council, and wish I had never gotten involved."

81 Responses



SUMMARY: The results would indicate that the Councilwomen are very comfortable in their role. I believe that the one negative answer was a slip of the pen, because the remainder of the questionnaire for this person indicated a very positive attitude, and further, the indication that she intended to run again.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Very exciting - I find myself doing things I didn't know I was capable of - I'm meeting new people, and broadening my personal horizons."

"I enjoy the challenge - although I realize that politics is not for every woman, as it is not for every man."

" I have encountered some difficulties being the only woman on the Council."

"I'm loving every minute of it. I have discovered a talent for speaking effectively-spontaneously-and for being able to persuade by logical argument. I have stood up under much pressure, and am gratified that I could do so."

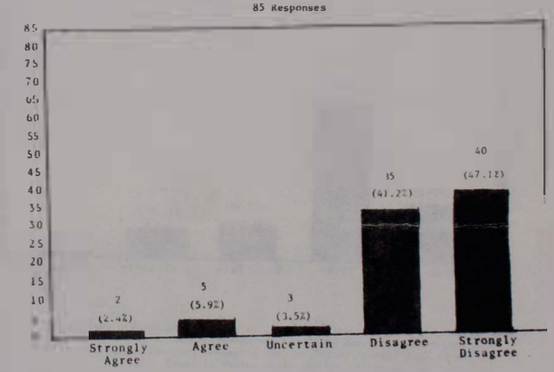
"I like the involvement - and the image."

"I have received many revelations about myself - and the kind of person I am."

"I'm running again - oft and walking - and loving every minute."

QUESTION #5 "I Feel more confortable working in areas such as city beautification, culture, child-care centers, etc., than I feel in areas like budget, street improvements, etc."

85 Responses

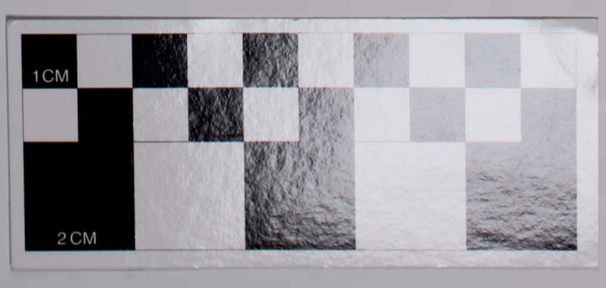


SUMMARY:

Comments would indicate that while a councilwoman may have originally run for office because of a special interest in a particular matter (historical preservation and beautification being mentioned), they quickly become involved and participate fully in all areas.

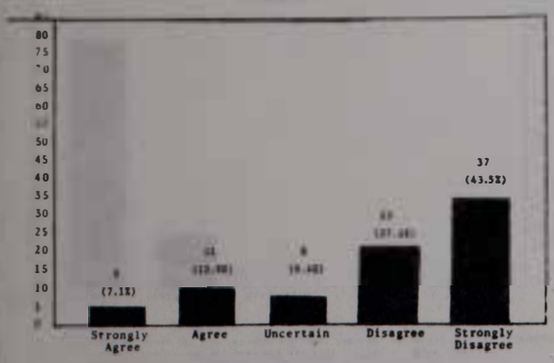
COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Money, and the wise spending of public funds, is a good part of what it is all about."



QUESTION #5 "Because I am a woman, I feel that I have been excluded from certain informal meetings."

85 Responses



SUMMARY

While some councilwomen acknowledge that the male members do get together and chat, they appear to feel that it is generally informal in natura and does not relate to anybody's affectiveness to perform their duties.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN

"Excluded, but not bothered by it."

"Not because I am a woman, but because I'm not part of a clique."

"The members of my council have such diverse interests, they have little reason to get together in informal setting."

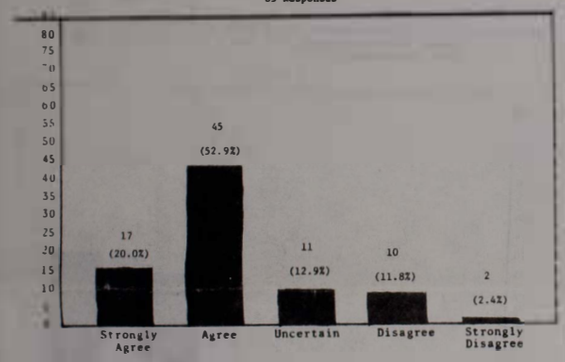
"I know of no such instances, and if I did, I would put a stop to it if I became aware.'

"Same situation is reversed when there are two women on Council."

"It might be nice to be in on scuttlebutt, but it's not necessary."

QUESTION #7 "I believe that a woman brings certain qualities (intuitiveness, compassion) to this office that are not usually found in male members."

85 Responses



SUMMARY: Most Councilwomen feel that they, as women, bring certain qualities. Many expressed that women provide a new viewpoint, and that since women appear to be more "issue" than "process" oriented, they will spend more time studying the issues and are often better prepared.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"I feel that I add a new way of looking at the problems. Many of my ideas and opinions have been accepted and used."

"I disagree with this concept."

"Female chauvinism."

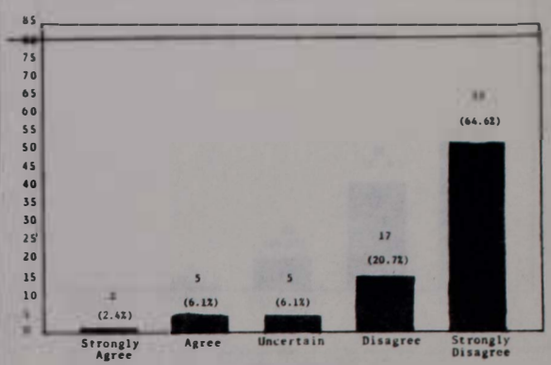
"I think a woman's 'special' qualities are a result of her induced 'roles' or cultural background. Future generations may produce women who are not distinctive from men in these areas."

"I have received expression from some senior citizens that they believe that women tend to be more honest."

"Women seem to have less ego-investment than do men."

QUESTION #6 "My family does not give me the kind of support (physical as well as moral) that I need to meet my obligations as a Councilmember.

82 Responses



SUMMARY: The responses indicate that the Councilwomen are receiving the kinds of support they need from their families. It would also appear from the answers in other parts of the questionnaire that most Councilwomen were involved in community affairs long before going onto Council, so the families are accustomed to "Mom and Wife" having outside activities and meetings.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

"Most women run for Council after family is grown."

"They are supportive most of the time."

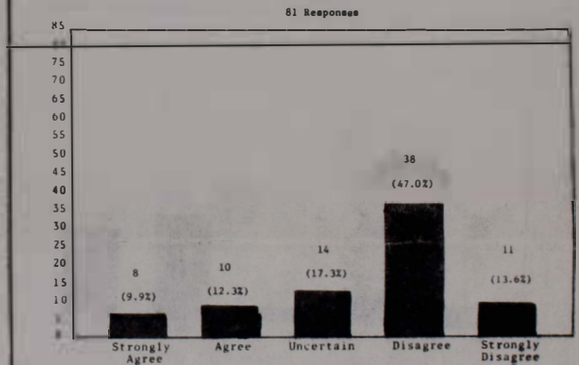
"Family suffers when they know political pressure is being put on Mom - I've had to quit discussing some things at home - and I miss and need this outlet."

"Problematic marriage worsened because husband feels his view should be reflected rather than mine - this after he had urged me to run."

"Married women need supportive husbands. It's hard to juggle all Council commitments and still have dinner on the table at 6:00."

QUESTION #8 "During my campaign period, the majority of my supporters and campaign workers were women."

81 Responses



SUMMARY: I believe at this point, that this question should have been divided into two inquiries. While most respondents stated that their campaign workers were women, they could not go along with saying that their supporters (including financial) were woman. While the women supporters served the coffee and knocked on doors, it appears that many supportive checks were written by men.

COMMENTS BY COUNCILWOMEN:

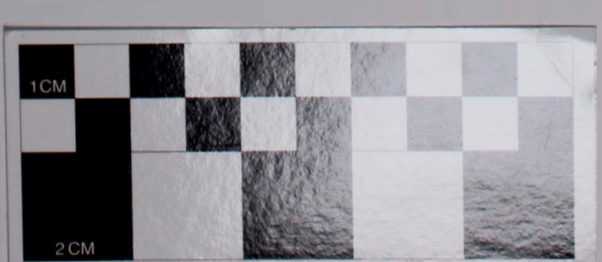
"For some reason, women are reluctant to support women, but will support men instead.

"My supporters were men - my campaign workers were women."

"My first financial support came from men."

"My campaign workers were women, but not so with supporters."

"Until women become more self-assured and secure within themselves, they will not be able to support other women. Women are still competing for men."



Objective 3a

OPEN ENDED QUESTION #1 - "I ran (or accepted office) because . . . . . ."

SUMMARY: The responses to this question indicate that, almost without exception, women run for Council after mind-boggling numbers of years of community service. Many listed volunteer involvements that went back for years; often starting with PTA, youth organizations, League of Women Voters, school boards, citizen's advisory groups, community planning, Park and Recreation Commission, Traffic Circulation Committees, and Planning Commission - the list was almost endless. Eventually they decided (sometimes out of frustration at existing Council) that they wanted to run for Council and have that final vote.

Another common thread was the often-expressed love of community, concern for its future, and dissatisfaction over the direction it was taking. Land uses and development were often mentioned in this context. In line with this, many former Planning Commissioners (lots of former women Planning Commissioners are now on Councils) expressed disgust that their decisions were being overturned by the (then) Council for political reasons.

Several indicated that they saw need to break up long-established (all-male) Council cliques, and felt that a new viewpoint was needed, and that they could provide that new viewpoint.

Many, many expressed that they felt they were qualified, had knowledge of the issues, had something to contribute, wanted the involvement, had the time to devote, and were given lots of encouragement and support. Many indicated that they had worked in campaigns previously (for other candidates), and knew the ropes.

Unusual reasons for running (or accepting) were: serving on Council is a family tradition; took over deceased husbands seat (two). One said that after fulfilling her husband's term, she ran again, this time with her own goals and projects.

OPEN ENDED QUESTION #2 "Why, in your opinion, are there so few women serving on City Councils"?

SUMMARY: By far, the most common reason expressed in response to this question has to do with cultural bias - Council is viewed as s "man's job". One Councilwoman reflected the thoughts expressed by the majority by stating, "Politics have the reputation of being a hard, aggressive-no-holds barred game. This is the antithesis of the traditionally female role. Women are not programmed for this role - or to expect this type of status success." Others expressed it by saying that women have feelings of incapability, inferiority and uncertainty; they are less oriented to aggressive give and take, and their place "appears" to be in the home.

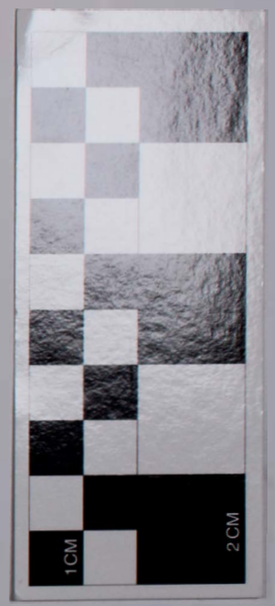
The word "fear" appeared many times: fear of appearing unfeminine, fear of appearing pushy or tough; fear of public decision-making; fear of alienating friends as result of decisions; fear of losing what amounts to a popularity contest; fear of ridicule, and fear of public censure.

Another major reason that women are not on more Councils is that today's woman already has many time-consuming jobs - wife, mother, and many hold full-time outside-the-home jobs. These combinations, it was stated, almost preclude a woman from attempting another full-time job (that of serving on a Council). Many expressed that just serving on a Council imposes unusual demands on one's time, energy, and personality, and is a "huge commitment".

It was often expressed that women have a difficult time getting sufficient financial backing to run a successful campaign, and must often spend a lot of their own money.

Other responses were "lack of interest (just as with men)", "men don't want women in government", "lack of a good wife to support her", "women are not objective by nature", "women are not usually team members", "job offers lots of work and little or no pay", "husbands discourage, or at least don't support", "many women still prefer to work and speak through men".

Many expressed that the "cultural bias" stereotype is diminishing, as evidenced by the growing numbers of women who are running and winning seats, and that future generations will overcome the fears, and that we will see more and more women serving on Councils.



OPEN ENDED QUESTION #3 - "What, in your opinion, could be done to encourage more women to run for this office"?

SUMMARY: Four major measures that were most often mentioned were: 1) present Councilwomen serve as examples, 2) talk it up, and encourage competent women to get involved, 3) training for youth and for those adults who show an interest, 4) more appointments to commissions and committees as a starting point.

1) Serve as examples. This measure of encouragement was most often mentioned. Present Councilwomen appear to see themselves as trailblazers and examples for future Councilwomen (many, many stated that they are the first and only woman to ever serve on their City's Council. They state that by serving as good examples, it will spark interest in others. One Councilwoman stated, "As more Rose Birds are in the news, women will say 'why not me'."

2) Talk it up to involved competent women. The next suggestion most often mentioned is that Councilwomen, as well as other community leaders, should openly urge intelligent competent women to become involved in the political process; to attend Council meetings, and to ask for appointments to advisory groups.

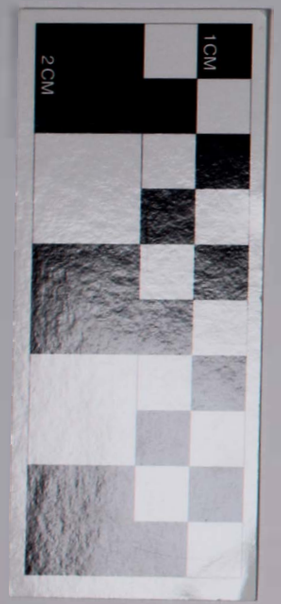
3) Training in the political process. Several stated that assertiveness training (not women's lib) for girls should start in the cradle to rid females of notions about always acting in supportive roles. Others stated that more emphasis should be placed on the local process at the high school level, with Councilwomen speaking to students. On the adult level, many, many Councilwomen suggested that women's organizations, such as AAUW, League of Women Voters, sororities, Women's political Caucus groups, etc. should organize and sponsor training seminars to encourage potential candidates, and to teach them how to conduct campaigns, how to raise campaign funds, and how to deal with some of the problems experienced in the past.

4) Appointments to Committees, Commissions, and Boards. This was viewed by many as an important starting point for effectively understanding and working within the municipal system. From these commissions, potential future Councilwomen can learn both process and issues. Methods to get more women onto commissions are: encourage them to apply, and present their names (and qualifications) for consideration by the appointing agency.

OPEN ENDED QUESTION #3 (Continued)

Another measure of encouragement deals with financial backing. Many thought that women's organizations should be urged to give financial support.

An interesting comment from one Councilwomen was "The simple knowledge that while we may do no better than males, it would difficult to do worse, should give any competent woman the necessary self-confidence". Many Councilwomen pointed out that more and more women are running every year - and winning. This is true, as evidenced by the statistics. (In November, 1976, Western Cities Magazine stated that in 1974, there were 194 female Councilmembers. This study of Women Serving on California City Councils is based on a list of 281 female Councilmembers, as identified in the files of the League of California Cities.)



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